



Saving Grandpa Mike

Here's how Columbia Station resident Mike Waugh beat the odds and survived a complete blockage of an artery behind his heart.

by **KenMcEntee**
Contributing Writer

This past Thanksgiving at the home of Mike and Jill Waugh included a feast for 22 family members. Mike was happy to be among them.

"I guess I wasn't supposed to make it," he says, discussing the heart attack he suffered in October. "They call it a 'widow maker,' which is a complete blockage of an artery behind the heart."

Recovery from such a heart attack is so rare that Mike, a 61-year-old electrician from Columbia Station, is now part of a national study of the condition.

Mike didn't experience the classic heart attack symptoms—pressure in the chest or a sharp pain in his left arm—but he knew something was wrong when he awoke on the morning of Oct. 19, 2011.

"When I woke up my jaw was killing me," he recalls. "I brushed my teeth and took a shower, and the pain kept getting worse. I went downstairs to look up the symptoms on the computer, then my right arm went numb and my jaw was just burning. I felt like I wanted to pull my teeth out for some relief."

He then made what could have been a big mistake.

"I've been told that I should have called

9-1-1," Mike admits. "But I got in the car and drove myself to the Emergency Room(ER) at Southwest General. I called my wife and told her to meet me there."

When the ER nurse heard Mike's symptoms, she immediately put him in a wheelchair and rolled him into a treatment room. Then things got fuzzy.

"I remember them giving me oxygen, then I threw up," he faintly recalls. "Being an electrician, I would compare what happened next to pulling the handle to disconnect the electrical power in a building. It was suddenly unbelievably black and very quiet. Then there was a dot of light and I saw the doctor telling me that I was having a heart attack. The next thing I knew I was in the Cath Lab."

Trilok Sharma, MD, a board-certified cardiologist on the Medical Staff at Southwest General and medical director of Southwest General's Cardiac Catheterization (Cath) Lab, fed a stent to open the blocked artery through Mike's femoral (groin) artery.

"An hour after the procedure I felt great, even though I had a sandbag on my leg for six hours to prevent bleeding," he says. "Shortly after, they took the sandbag off and I was up and walking around. My color came back, and the nurses and staff were telling me how happy they were that I made

it. They just couldn't believe how well I was doing."

Jaikirshan Khatri, MD is one of the few cardiologists in the area who is certified to perform radial catheterization.

Over the next couple weeks, additional stents were inserted into partially blocked arteries. Using a relatively new procedure, Jaikirshan Khatri, MD, a board-certified cardiologist on the Medical Staff at Southwest General, inserted the stents through Mike's radial (wrist) artery—a procedure referred to as radial catheterization. Dr. Khatri is one of the few cardiologists in the area who is certified to perform the procedure through the wrist, which causes less bleeding compared to the traditional catheterization through the groin.

"I can't begin to tell you how well I was treated at Southwest General," Mike says. "And they treated my wife and daughters just as well as they treated me. It was a traumatic experience for my family, and the staff kept them very well informed and

comforted them the whole time."

Mike's family, including his two daughters and eight grandchildren, was so grateful that they sent family pictures with notes to the staff in the ER, the Cath Lab and the Coronary Care Unit. "Thank you for saving Grandpa Mike!" the notes read.

"Dr. Khatri told me that my heart was excellent, but my plumbing was terrible," Mike says. "I am in much better shape now thanks to my care at Southwest General."

Just a few weeks after his heart attack, he was back to work at Republic Steel, in Lorain. The event taught him an important lesson.

"I had no idea how much my well-being affected my family," he admits. "I ate whatever I wanted, and I didn't exercise a lot. It was very eye-opening."

Don't ignore heart attack warning signs. If you think you or a loved one is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 immediately. For any other cardiac-related questions or to learn more about the "Healthy Heart for Her" and the "Healthy Heart for Him" programs, call 1-877-SWG-BEAT (794-2328) a FREE 24-hour support line, or visit www.swgeneral.com.



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After Mike Waugh survived a heart attack, his family sent pictures with notes to the ER, the Cath Lab and the Coronary Care Unit at Southwest General.